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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Question of sending visiting missions to Territories

Report of the Acting Chairman

1. At its 1472nd meeting, on 12 June 1997, the Special Committee adopted a resolution concerning the question of sending visiting missions to Territories (A/AC.109/2095).[1] The operative part of the resolution reads as follows:

> "*The Special Committee*,
>
> "1. *Stresses* the need to dispatch periodic visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to facilitate the full, speedy and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples with respect to those Territories;
>
> "2. *Calls upon* the administering Powers to cooperate or continue to cooperate with the United Nations by receiving United Nations visiting missions in the Territories under their administration;
>
> "3. *Requests* the administering Powers to consider new approaches in the work of the Special Committee, and calls upon them to cooperate with the Special Committee in its efforts;
>
> "4. *Requests* its Chairman to continue consultations with the administering Powers concerned on the implementation of paragraph 2 of the present resolution and to report thereon to the Special Committee as appropriate;
>
> "5. *Also requests* its Chairman to enter into consultations with the administering Power of Guam with a view to facilitating the dispatch of a United Nations visiting mission to that Territory".

2. On 10 December 1997, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 52/77 A, paragraphs 4 and 5 of which read as follows:

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"*The General Assembly*,

"4. *Stresses* the importance for the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to be apprised of the views and wishes of the peoples of the Territories and to enhance its understanding of their condition;

"5. *Reaffirms* that United Nations visiting missions to the Territories at an appropriate time and in consultation with the administering Powers are an effective means of ascertaining the situation in the Territories, and requests the administering Powers and the elected representatives of the peoples of the Territories to assist the Special Committee in this regard."

3. An account of the consultations held by the Acting Chairman in accordance with operative paragraph 4 of the Special Committee's resolution is set out below.

4. In accordance with the mandate entrusted to the Acting Chairman by the Special Committee, the Acting Chairman, by letters dated 2 July 1998 addressed to the Permanent Representatives of France, New Zealand, Portugal, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, in their capacity as administering Powers, drew their attention to the provisions of the relevant General Assembly resolutions on the question of sending visiting missions to Territories. In drawing their attention to General Assembly resolution 52/77 A, and resolution A/AC.109/2095 of the Special Committee, the Acting Chairman informed the representatives of the administering Powers that the Special Committee continued to attach the utmost importance to the dispatch of United Nations visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories as a means of securing firsthand information on those Territories. The Acting Chairman once again appealed to the administering Powers to cooperate or continue to cooperate with the United Nations in the sending of such missions.

5. The Acting Chairman restated to the administering Powers that their full cooperation was essential for the successful implementation of the Plan of Action approved by the General Assembly for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. He took the opportunity to express his appreciation to the administering Powers that cooperated in facilitating the participation of a number of representatives from Non-Self-Governing Territories in the seminars that the Special Committee had organized within the context of the Decade.[2]

6. The Acting Chairman recalled with appreciation that, at the invitation of the Government of New Zealand and the Council, or *Faipule*, of Tokelau, the Special Committee had dispatched a United Nations visiting mission to Tokelau in July 1994.

7. The Acting Chairman, in his consultations with the administering Powers reiterated the need for visiting missions to ascertain the views of the peoples of the Territories concerned.

8. By letter dated 15 July 1998, addressed to the Acting Chairman of the Special Committee, the Chargé d'affaires of Portugal stated the following:

"... Portugal would be willing, in principle, to invite the Special Committee on Decolonization to visit East Timor. However, we are unable to formulate such an invitation given the illegal occupation of East Timor by Indonesia, in violation of international law and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council.

"Efforts to reach a solution to this problem are currently being undertaken by the Secretary-General and his personal representative at two levels: in the framework

of a tripartite dialogue and in the framework of an all-inclusive intra-Timorese dialogue.

"Portugal will continue to keep the Special Committee on Decolonization informed on the developments concerning the Territory, despite the fact that, owing to the current situation, we are unable to fulfil our administration mandate and, therefore, conclude the decolonization process."

9. By letter dated 30 July 1998, addressed to the Acting Chairman of the Special Committee, the Permanent Representative of New Zealand stated the following:

"... there is of course no question concerning the willingness of New Zealand – and indeed of Tokelau – to receive visiting missions at appropriate times. It is just four years since the last visiting mission, and there have been three earlier ones.

The Government of New Zealand "believe(s) that through the regular transmission of information and its participation and Tokelau's directly in the work of the Special Committee, the United Nations is currently well informed about the situation in the territory.

"The most recent statements made by the *Ulu* of Tokelau and the Administrator on 8 July 1998 will be recalled. Those statements indicate that Tokelau is moving into an active phase in the development of its self-government capacity. Indeed, Tokelau is working to have in place within 12 to 18 months new structures at both national and village levels. This reconstructed 'house of Tokelau' will ensure that all organizations and agencies, including the public service for which an authority in New Zealand has held statutory responsibility since 1967, will be accountable to Tokelau authorities.

"Tokelau appreciates the Special Committee's positive response to this situation, as is shown in the resolution which was adopted without a vote on 10 July 1998. Equally appreciated is the cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme. Meetings with the United Nations Development Programme held by the *Ulu* when he was in New York served to take this cooperation to a new level. Tokelau was informed subsequently that the United Nations Development Programme is making available funding of $US 150,000 from its regional governance programme to support Tokelau's work on constitutional and political development.

"The *Ulu* became aware of the Special Committee's present approach regarding a visiting mission during his visit and, upon his return to Tokelau he held meetings with the leaders of each village in order to report on his activities abroad. In that reporting, mention was made of the suggestion of a further visiting mission. The same reporting is included in the documentation for a General *Fono*, which commenced on 30 July 1998.

"Taking into account Tokelau's limited human and material resources, there is an administering power/territory consensus that its best course in the phase ahead is to concentrate on the immediate challenge: that of developing the detail of the new institutional arrangements and of addressing the varied capability and resource implications in conjunction with New Zealand. There will also be consequential legislative changes in New Zealand and Tokelau.

"The Special Committee, in its latest resolution, has again noted Tokelau's desire to move at its own pace towards an act of self-determination. As current initiatives and endeavours relating to a reconstructed 'house of Tokelau' bear fruit, Tokelau will become better placed to assess the question of self-determination. Clearly any

significant statement made by Tokelau on that subject will be important for the United Nations too.

"In the meantime, New Zealand and Tokelau will keep the matter of a visiting mission under review. It is envisaged that a further assessment could be made in mid-1999, once it is clearer how Tokelau is faring in its current endeavour. The Special Committee may be assured that any fresh assessment of the situation will be conveyed to it in a timely manner."

10. The Acting Chairman will keep the Special Committee apprised of any further developments in his consultations with the administering Powers concerned on this question.

11. A list of the visiting missions dispatched by the Special Committee or by the General Assembly is contained in the annex to the present report.

Notes

[1] See A/52/23 (Part II), chap. IV, para. 6. The complete report will be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 23* (A/52/23).

[2] Regional seminars were held in Vanuatu (A/AC.109/1040 and Corr.1) and Barbados (A/AC.109/1043) in 1990; in Grenada (A/AC.109/1114) in 1992; in Papua New Guinea (A/AC.109/1159) in 1993; in Trinidad and Tobago (A/AC.109/2030) in 1995; in Papua New Guinea (A/AC.109/2058) in 1996; in Antigua and Barbuda in 1997 (A/AC.109/2089); and in Nadi, Fiji, in 1998 (A/AC.109/2121). The first two were held in observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples; the last six were held in the context of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

Annex

Visiting missions dispatched by the Special Committee or the General Assembly

1965	Cook Islands (election supervision)
1966	Equatorial Guinea
1967	Aden
1968	Equatorial Guinea (referendum/election supervision)
1971	Papua New Guinea (jointly with the Trusteeship Council)
1972	Niue Papua New Guinea (election observation, jointly with the Trusteeship Council)
1974	Niue (referendum observation) Cocos (Keeling) Islands Gilbert and Ellice Islands (referendum observation)
1975	Cape Verde Montserrat Spanish Sahara
1976	British Virgin Islands Tokelau
1977	French Somaliland (referendum/election observation) Cayman Islands United States Virgin Islands
1979	Guam New Hebrides
1980	Turks and Caicos Islands (April) Cocos (Keeling) Islands Turks and Caicos Islands (October/November) (election observation)
1981	Tokelau American Samoa
1982	Montserrat
1984	Cocos (Keeling) Islands (act of self-determination) Anguilla
1986	Tokelau
1989	Namibia (election observation)
1994	Tokelau